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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how economic, social, and political factors influenced the provision of education in isolated areas of North Queensland (Australia) during 1919-1939. The educational system of that time was characterized by central control of the state that provided education and close supervision of the nongovernment schools. Technological advances in agriculture and two depressions tended to depopulate the north of Queensland as people moved to more urban areas. The Australian Labour Party supported the provision of basic primary education that was vocational in nature, but political parties disagreed on the nature and extent of post-primary schooling. Educational provisions and school buildings did not take into account the local climate and needs of the people. Transportation was difficult for many rural school children. Private schools suffered financial difficulties from 1930-1934 when economic conditions made parents unwilling to pay for education, particularly for daughters. Correspondence school was successful, but students lacked peer interaction. The itinerant teacher system was phased out by 1934 because it was highly inefficient. The advent of motor vehicles reduced isolation for some, and allowed consolidation to proceed. In 1929, cuts in public expenditure led to massive unemployment and migration to cities. After 1934, the growing use of aircraft and developments in radio reduced the isolation of northern Queenslanders. (KS)

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An Historical and Geographical Perspective on Providing Education to Children in Isolated Places, (North Queensland, 1919–1939)

A.H. Higgins

ANZHES CONFERENCE

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An Historical and Geographical Perspective on Providing Education to Children in Isolated Places, (North Queensland, 1919–1939)

A.H. Higgins

G. Blainey wrote that "Distance is as characteristic of Australia as mountains are of Switzerland".[1] This phenomena, the small population and the harsh climate have influenced the distribution of Australia's people. As a result, most Australians live in urban places, particularly on the eastern coast. For the remainder, their lot was to live in small country towns or on isolated stations. Australians have always recognised that isolation and distance are two of the moulds that have continued to shape their history. The purpose of this paper is to comment upon the relationship existing between isolation and the provision of education to isolated places. During the course of various governments' attempts to provide education, economic, social and political themes and their related processes have changed and influenced that provision. These factors are particularly evident in north Queensland.

The settlement of Queensland began in the south-east corner and spread northwards up the coastal fringe and westward to the inland after 1860. The settlers took children with them and the newly established State Government adapted the education system of New South Wales in an attempt to spread the availability of schooling. This system actually began in 1848 in Australia and its chief characteristics were of central control of the State provided education and close supervision of the non-government schools. These two features deeply influenced both the schools and the parents' attitudes towards schooling.

Strict government regulations applied not only to education but also to land tenure and during the period of European land settlement, the pattern of land occupance underwent a series of changes involving city based social, economic and technical advances tended to draw many original settlers from their isolated homesteads to the neo-urban country towns, and eventually, back to the major metropolitan centres. This movement was a deliberate, selective process and it had its greatest effects in the harshest and therefore most marginally settled places.[2] The accompanying population density maps show that between the 1880's and 1920's the population continued to spread westward but it had certain characteristics common to pioneer communities, i.e., there were few old people, a high proportion of young couples and many single young men. These features would normally disappear as settlements established themselves but this did not occur in northern and western Queensland and, consequently, the phenomena of male dominated, low density population remained a characteristic of settlements in the north during the 1920's and 1930's.

Technological advances in agriculture tended to maintain the population trends shown because, unlike the events in peasant agricultural economics, the application of new ideas increased the productivity faster than the population declined. Not only did this encourage the population to move eastward, back the coast, but it also reduced the margin of tolerance of the capacity for communities to absorb the unemployed. Therefore, the general effect of technological advance and the two depressions was to depopulate the north of Queensland. Also, accompanying an increase in the use of machinery was the general reluctance of parents to allow their children to leave home early to acquire boarding school education elsewhere. This created tensions within the society acting between parents, laws that demanded compulsory education and the means the Government adopted to provide the education to isolated families.

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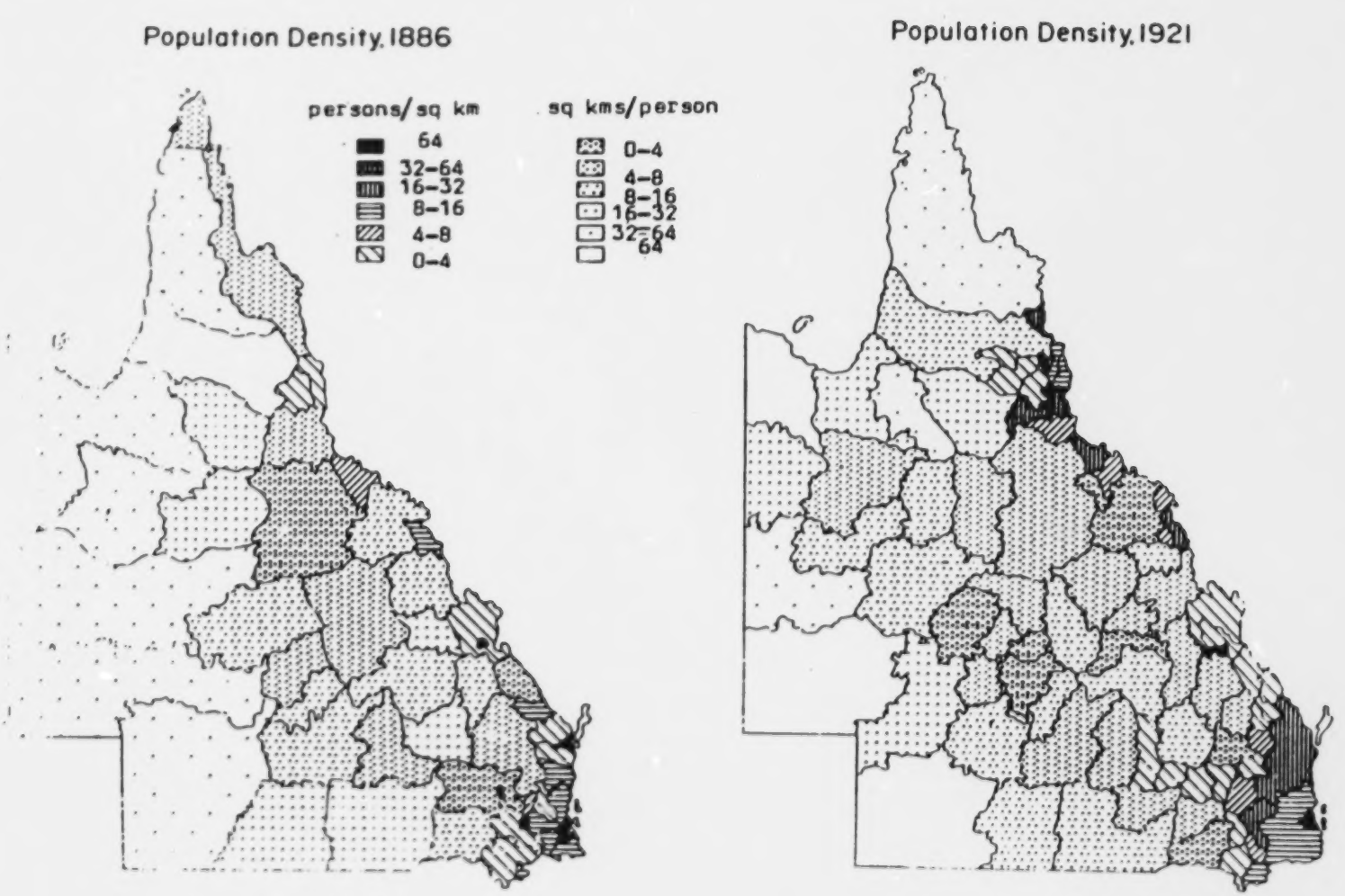
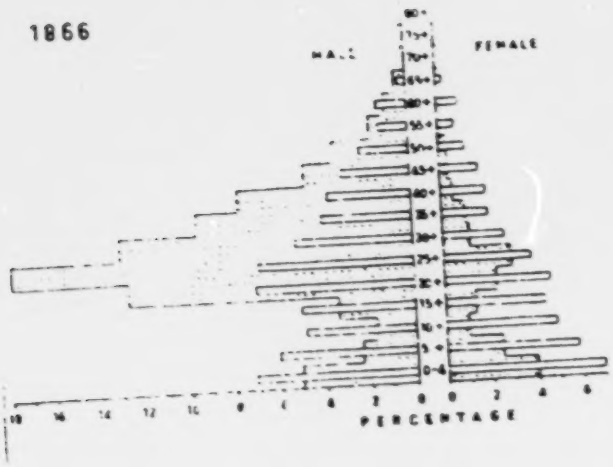
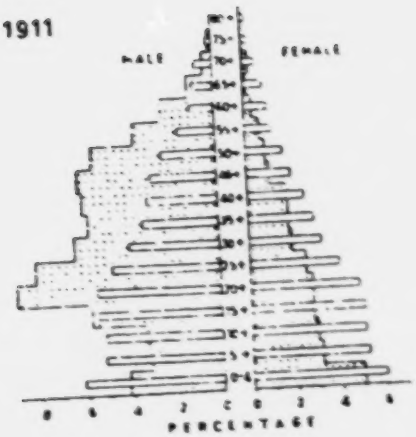

Population Density, 1886
persons/sq km
64
32-64
16-32
8-16
4-8
0-4
sq kms/person
0-4
4-8
8-16
16-32
32-64
64
Population Density, 1921

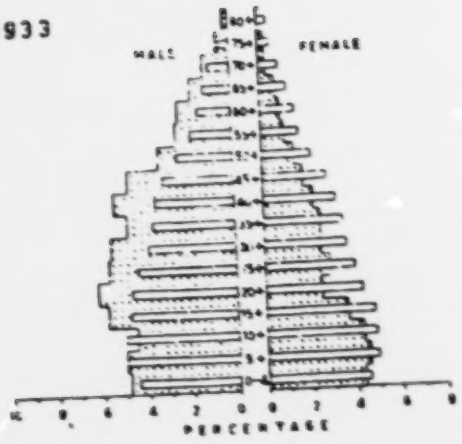
1866



1911



1933



The attitudes of the people in the north compounded the politicians' problems of deciding on the type of education to provide. Some parents did not approve of non-religious teaching. Generally, these were the parents whose perceived social status tended to colour their view of the education most suitable for their children. This applied in both urban and rural settings. In north Queensland it was the wealthier owners of stations who tended to prefer private, secondary boarding education, often of a religious nature, for their children. To secure this tuition for the children meant their leaving home early in life. On the other hand the poorer parents, who often could not afford the high private school fees, kept their children at home and they demand a more easily accessible primary education that was vocationally rather than academically oriented.

The policies of the political parties reflected these attitudes. The Australian Labour Party supported the provision of basic primary education that was vocational in nature. It also supported some State secondary schools in the rural areas. It advanced the development of technical education. Other, more socially conservative parties, tended to favour governmental support for non-government private schools. Therefore, both major political parties supported the general provision of primary education but disagreed on the nature and extent of post-primary schooling. The resolution of these conflicting desires produced a compromise system in which most parents supported the State primary system, either in small schools, or by itinerant teachers, or by the correspondence system.

State provided teachers taught children of both the rich and the poor in their primary school years but after that the wealthier parents sent their children to the secondary boarding schools, whether or not they had a scholarship. The poorer parents either moved to a larger town if their children won a scholarship or, more commonly, did not have their children advance beyond the primary school unless it was to some form of vocational education. These particular societal tensions occurred against a background in which the population tended to become more concentrated, thus making it possible for the Government to consolidate the primary schools. One result of this was the further isolation of those who chose to remain on the station and consolidation ensured their continued dependence on the itinerant teachers or the correspondence school.

The general economic climate of the time also played a major role in influencing the political decisions about providing education. Those who made parliamentary speeches during the first world war suggested that all the parties supported the ideal of the independent agricultural yeomanry. The politicians' attempt to realise their dream occurred after 1918 through the soldier-settlement scheme. This encouraged soldiers to take up rural life, but many of these settlements had little chance of success because of the prevailing uncertain economic climate. For example, many soldiers who took up selections had to wait for finance until after the 1920 depression and then abandon the properties during the 1930 depression. Often they still had great debts to repay to the banks. In addition, the early 1930's saw a flow and counter-flow of people as they moved around the country in search of work, and the nett result was a rural population loss.

Another great theme characterising the 1920's and 1930's was education for efficiency in a centralised system. This manifested itself as an apparently equal provision of education to all children, whether in Burketown or Brisbane. Parliament's adoption of the centralised system did not arise by accident. Queensland's earliest governments recognised that voluntary effort in isolated small communities could not help local schools to attain even a moderate standard of primary education. This could be achieved only through a centralised system at the time.

The benefits of the centralised system derived from the skills and qualities of those who managed it. This depended on choosing the right man for the right job on the basis of ability and not on the danger of becoming bureaucratically inert. B.J. McKenna headed the

Education Department at this time and although he was quite a capable administrator he was a product of the Queensland system. It was regrettable that the Australian Labour Party failed to capitalise on the opportunity to manage substantial change that its long reign in office allowed. Indeed, the Party had its best educational ideas just before it lost office in 1929. After that time, financial restraints prevented any initiatives being adopted by the Government where they required additional finance. McKenna had to obey the instructions given to him by his Ministers according to the traditions of the Westminister Parliamentary system, and their conservatism in education hamstrung some of his better ideas. However, McKenna did manage to appoint L.D. Edwards as his successor and he proved to be an advanced educational leader, although he too was constrained by economic, political and military events.

The bureaucratic inertia and the tendency to centralise grew in the inter-war period and economic difficulties caused the education system to stagnate as politicians cut public expenditure. The Education Department provided 'equal' education to north Queensland by its provision of similar buildings, similar pupil-teacher ratios and a common curriculum. But the different life-styles and the difficulties of living in isolated places demanded more than just that sort of provision if the children of isolated parents were to have more genuine equality.

The Department managed, by inspection and examination, to attain a high level of statewide efficiency in education but it was the efficiency of a machine and there remained the tendency to adapt the means to the ends, without necessarily questioning either in educational terms. The centralised control of education tended to stifle public opinion about the nature of educational provision except during the depression and even then the public attitude was highly flavoured by political dogma. Consequently, the outward appearance of efficiency and equality of provision caused the poorly informed public's participation to be minimised. This characteristic received further support through a teacher transferred system that did not encourage teachers to become too closely involved with the residents in the isolated towns to which the Department temporarily transferred them. None of this need to have happened in a vital system but the economic, social and political trends all acted to maintain the status quo during this era.

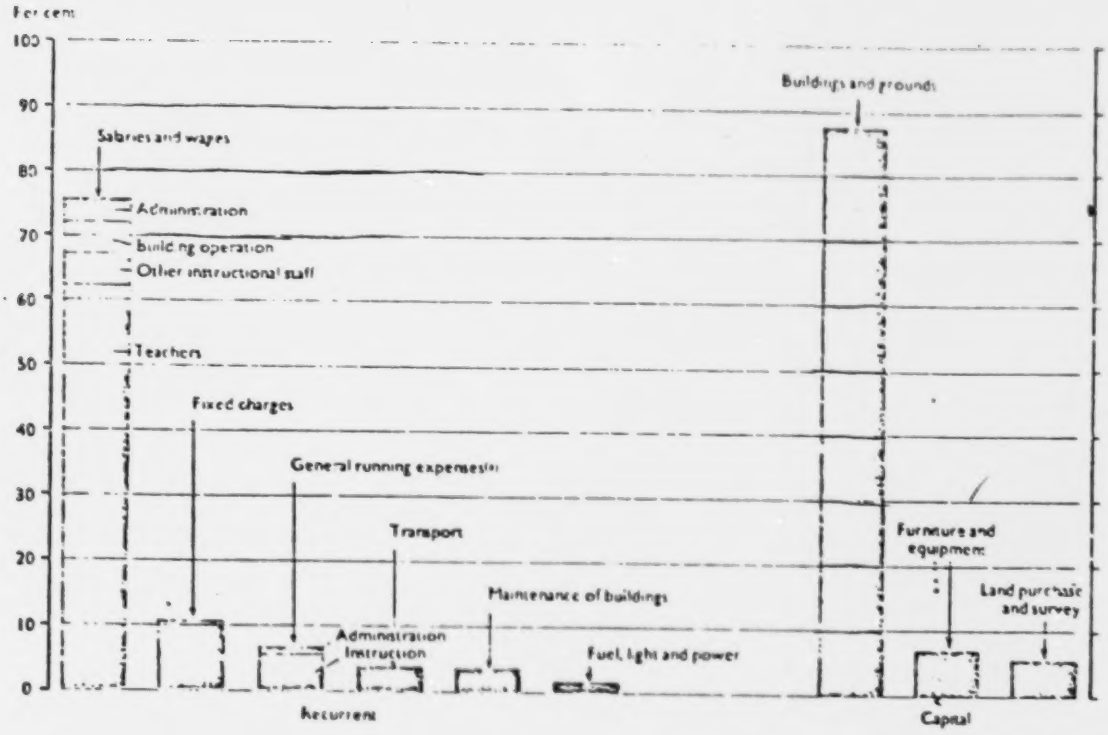
Different places in north Queensland relied upon various economic activities and these, in turn, tended to produce different life-styles. For example, the Mitchell River region, a cattle area governed by monsoonal rainfall, varied from the Atherton Tableland, a small farming region growing cash crops. But, the nature of the educational provision did not take these factors into account. This failure was directly attributable to the philosophy supporting centralised control. Moreover, the evidence seemed to suggest that many northern residents preferred the provision to be this way because they felt that any other provision would have been an inferior one.

North Queenslanders did attempt to modify their living patterns in other ways to adapt to the local climate. The medical congress held in Brisbane in 1924 showed that successful living in the tropics of Australia was a matter of applied public health. House designs tended to reflect this fact but school designs did not. Many were nothing more than wooden copies of stone buildings founded in northern European countries. They often faced the sun, had insufficient fly-screening and made little attempt to provide for humidity variations. Perhaps even worse than these omissions was their failure to provide adequate toilet facilities. This led to an ongoing high incidence of ophthalmia among school children, especially in the hotter, dryer weather when the flies were at their worst.

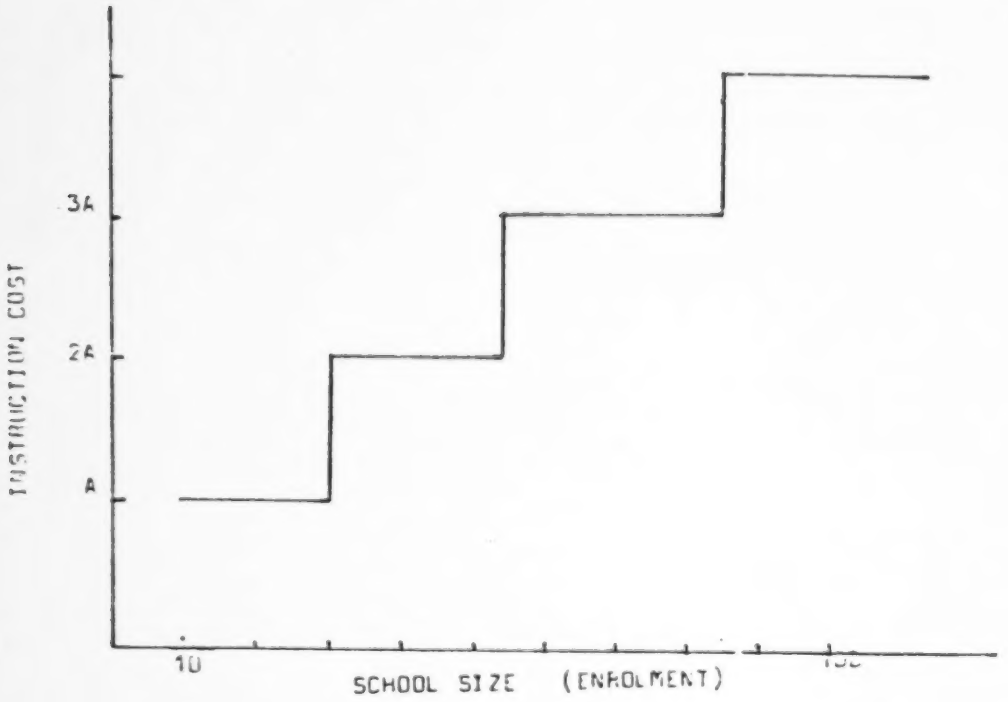
Poor roads and great distances made it difficult for children to attend schools. The five kilometre attendance limits seemed to be reasonable for those families who owned horses or other adequate means of transport, but the rule took no account of the problems related to

the northern tropics. For example, one northern resident, Alice Jackson, had to cross a large creek on her journey to school in Charters Towers. This creek often flooded between November and April and, therefore, she could not attend school if there was any possibility of substantial tropical rain. Not only did poor roads make travelling difficult for pupils but they also cause the cost of transported goods to rise, especially for school requisites or building fabric that had to be carted when there was no railway available. Finally, these poor roads and the rich soil that prevented travel during the 'wet' and the black mud further isolated lonely communities during the wet season and forced stations to stock up with food for the duration.

The changing population patterns of this era tended to reduce the rural numbers and increase the urban ones. During this time McKenna supported the principle of school consolidation, that is, the closure of smaller schools and having former pupils travel to a central school or enrol in the Correspondence School. The basic costs of maintaining a school might have been analysed in this way.



The diagram shows that after the land had been purchased and the building erected, then the teachers' wages and the maintenance cost constituted the major ongoing expenses. The salaries and wages component was also flexible in a similar manner.



The simple steps show the additional wage that had to be paid to teaches each time a new teacher was employed. The limits imposed by class sizes determined when a new teacher had to be provided. Therefore, in times of depression when politicians demanded cuts in public expenditure, then school administrators had to examine maintenance and salary costs closely.

Building and ground costs remained fixed if only one janitor was employed. In small one teacher schools the teacher acted as a janitor and this lowered the recurrent cost. That component could only be reduced by closing the school. This happened in the depressions of 1920 and 1930–34. The teachers' salary costs could be restricted only if the total number of teachers was reduced or their salaries cut. This meant, given a fixed school population, that the class sizes must have risen.

The abovementioned financial factor operated for both State and private schools. However, the reductions available to private schools were severely limited because too great a cut led to a loss of teaching capacity which lowered the status and eventually caused the enrolments to fall. On the other hand, the private school system reacted more favourable than did the State system in times of economic wellbeing. The opening of the schools in Charters Towers immediately after the world war one reflected this. The sharp depression of 1920 occurred after the school plans had been completed. However, as much as these schools could benefit from high agricultural and mineral prices, so they suffered from the fiscal effects of droughts, depressions and low prices.

This vulnerability led them into severe difficulties from 1930 to 1934. Both boys' and girls' schools lost pupils, but the girls suffered more so as parents appeared to be less willing to pay for their daughters' education. The figures stand out clearly in one Charters Towers school, at Blackheath. The Roman Catholic schools did not experience quite the same difficulties, firstly, because they charged lower fees and, secondly, because the Catholic clergy in the country areas of north Queensland tended to stress the benefits of religious education to their congregations more than did their non-Roman counterparts. The enrolment figures at Mt. Carmel and St. Mary's in Charters Towers tended to support this argument.

One of the most significant attempts made by the Queensland Government to overcome the handicaps of isolated children, appeared in the form of the Number One Primary Correspondence School[3,4]. An analysis of literacy rates in north Queensland between 1920 and 1940 showed that correspondence schooling had the chance to succeed theoretically because most families had one adult capable of both reading and writing at the time the school began in 1922. However, cost limitations and staff numbers prevented the school from enrolling illiterate adults, or those who wished to continue their schooling beyond their own terminal level.

Educationally, the Correspondence School tended to involve adults in the children's daily work and to demand a standard of work equal to that in an ordinary primary school, using an assignment method that attempted to relate subjects of study to each other in a comprehensible form. The continuous rotating system of assignment, marking and return proved to be the most efficient of the alternatives open to Bensted, the school's Principal, and the success of the system coincided with the general stress in Queensland on educational efficiency. However, no correspondence education could compensate for the lack of peer group interaction, so essential to early childhood development.

The itinerant teacher system began in 1901 and declined after 1930, to be phased out by 1934. These teachers travelled long distances in order to spend short periods of time teaching often reluctant pupils. The impact some of these teachers had on children lasted for many years but the infrequency of the visits caused the system to be inefficient, and that was a major fault in the Queensland Government's opinion. There is no doubt that many students looked forward to the teacher's visits, but many older boys preferred to muster cattle rather than to face the teacher who would expose their intellectual shortcomings. It is valuable to note that it was an itinerant teacher who proposed, in 1920, that the Government adopt the correspondence system. This more efficient and less expensive method of providing education to children in isolated places led to the downfall of the more humane itinerant system. Even so, the written word did not replace the valuable human contact provided by these teachers, whose services might have been retained in better economic circumstances. This was particularly so after 1934 when roads improved and motor vehicles came into more common use. Indeed, the itinerant teachers were a casualty of the depression.

An emphasis on practicality paralleled the demand for efficiency in Queensland. This practical influence began with those educators who reflected the utilitarian attitudes held by many rural residents. The Australian Labour Party, the dominant political influence in this era, drew its major support from the country. Many delegates to the A.L.P.'s conventions expressed an active dislike of academic or intellectual education because they believed that it led to satisfactory work for only a small number of pupils. This belief recognised the reality that most children would eventually take up manual work and only a few, perhaps as small as one per cent in north Queensland, would attend a university for which the academic curriculum of the school was designed. The very small numbers attending university from north Queensland seemed to indicate that the more physically distant from the institution the pupils lived, the less influence it exerted on their imaginations and the less likely they

were to attend it. This seemed to apply more to children of working people than to the sons and daughters of those who could afford to send their offspring to private schools in large towns and cities, where they came into contact with graduates more often.

The anti-academic bias of many north Queenslanders appeared in two educational examples. The first was the conversion of the School of Mines into a sub-branch of the Technical High School. It was true that the mining industry of Charters Towers had declined but the less active mines provided an opportunity for students to practice their skills and therefore, the closure of the mines alone did not justify the incorporation of the School into a High School. The second educational example of the bias was the innovation of the travelling manual training and domestic science classes. It is important to note that these railway carriages could have contained teaching material for almost any subject in the school curriculum, for example, practical chemistry, physics, art, or historical displays. However, the Education Department chose to teach woodwork, metalwork, dressmaking and cooking and these topics had no more curriculum validity than had any other school subjects at the time. Nevertheless, the support given by the people of the north to these classes showed how important local residents held them to be in educating their children.

The years between 1922 and 1928 saw the Australian economy growing in strength, despite and the drought of 1926–7 when the quantity of stock feed fell so low in the north that ponies used by the children to transport themselves to schoold and could not find enough food to maintain their condition. This and similar events shook the confidence of rural communities. They combined with the disillusionment of the post-was depression to place north Queenslanders in a state of uncertainty and did not encourage them to adopt the educational ideas found in America and England both before the war and at that time. Consequently, the essence of the Queensland system continued as a highly efficient but unimaginative adaptation of the scheme of the 1890's.

World war one stimulated the development of the infant technologies of radio communications, transport engineering and reliable internal combustion engines on the road and in the air. The greatest enemy of distance was adequate transport and the period from 1919 to 1939 saw the hose, bullock cart and dray replaced by the motor car and truck. These vehicles radically altered the relationships existing between towns and the people on nearby stations. The more common use of vehicles allowed parents and their children to visit each other and more distant places more often. This had the effect of widening the experiences of pupils and allowing them to become aware of the diverse nature of Australian society. Many brought this wider knowledge to bear on their school experiences inadvertently.

In addition, the reduction in time taken to travel between places brought about by motorisation allowed the consolidation of schools to proceed. This happened because parents were in a better position to transport their own children over greater distances to central schools. It is probable that had consolidation occurred at a time of reducing capacity to travel, then parents would have resisted the move. But, to account for this possibility, educators resorted to arguing that consolidation allowed pupils to gain access to a wider range of instructional materials and to meet other pupils with different backgrounds. There is no doubt that these benefits existed but there is no evidence to suggest that these advantaged outweighed the disadvantages of closing some schools that were the focal points for social activity in small isolated townships. Consequently, it is possible that the only factor maintaining the smallest integrated communities was the school. When this closed the surrounding shops and hotels lost business and failed as parents began to shop at the nearest larger town where their children attended the school. A further effect of these closures was to give those families who remained in the districts a great sense of isolation because fewer people lived there. Meanwhile, the casual traveller did not see as many places on his journey and there appeared to be a longer distance between each of them. All these factors increased the feeling of isolation.

The world's economic climate began to change in 1929 and by the middle of that year business houses; prominent individuals and conservative politicians agitated for cuts in public expenditure. Some blamed the neo-socialist philosophies of the A.L.P. for the declining economic fortune in Queensland. The conservative political parties and the major newspapers campaigned against the A.L.P. at the 1929 State election and partly hoodwinked the people into accepting that the economic difficulties could be easily solved by reducing public spending; The Nationalist-Country Party coalition won that election. Both State and Commonwealth governments tried to stem the international economic difficulties by cutting Australia public budgets and this included reducing teachers' salaries and minimising the amount of money spent on education. These clumsy attempts to modify the economy caused a great deal of hardship in an already economically troubled Australia. Massive unemployment followed.

The Queensland Government propagated the belief that there was adequate work available for those who would search for it. Therefore, those who lost their jobs were forced by the Government to travel in rural areas before they could receive the sustenance necessary to keep them alive. The futility of these attempts to find work in country areas became obvious as the unemployed country people began to move to the cities in search of the non-existent jobs. Clearly, jobs did not exist and travelling did not create them.

The Government and its supporters also advanced the proposition that the schools had failed to teach pupils the skills necessary for them to be employable. This implied that by changing the curriculum in schools, more jobs would be generated outside school and the pupils only needed the appropriate skills. Therefore, R.M. King, the Minister for Public Instruction, placed great emphasis on vocational instruction. He stressed practical subjects for boys and girls destined for labouring, skilled trades, or domestic duties. At the same time the Government abolished the travelling manual training and domestic science classes. Teachers emphasised vocational subjects related to woodwork, sheetmetalwork, leatherwork for boys and dressmaking and cooking for girls. By studying these subjects the pupils failed to generate a single job in the outside economy. Furthermore, the subjects were those of a dying technology and therefore, not only did the pupils remain unemployed after leaving school but also the skills they took with them were relatively useless within a few years as mechanical engineering became more prominent. The Government and its supporters benefitted from a by-product of this type of thinking. Those who could not find jobs began to blame their own educational failings. They did not reproach the Government for its financially disastrous economic policies that failed to create a sufficient amount of work for the people.

The Nationalist-Country Party led by Moore imposed additional hardships on the people of isolated north Queensland when it reduced the number of scholarships made available to pupils. The Government did this in the hope of reducing expenditure and it did so with the support of major metropolitan private schools. This resulted in fewer country people sending their children to post-primary schooling. Some parents remained prepared to support boys through secondary schooling in the hope that they would at least find work afterwards. There can be little doubt that the public meeting held in Charters Towers in 1930 to complain about scholarships helped to reduce the support for the Moore Government in the 1932 election. No headmaster of a private school in Charters Towers supported a reduction in the number of scholarships.

The scholarships itself was source of government funding for many private schools and its curtailment caused them financial hardship. Men such as O'Keefe, the Principal of All Souls, opposed this reduction on other than monetary grounds. His own poor background forced him to leave school and seek work early in life. Plainly, he did not want to see that happen to his own pupils. It was a time of hardship for Charters Towers' schools. Rev. R.E. Bacon,

Thornborough's principal, faced with falling student numbers, the economic depression, a high debt and a fear of the future, committed suicide. Perhaps the loss of the guaranteed income proved to be too much for the debt-ridden school.

The Roman Catholic schools fared better in the depression for reasons similar to those operating in 1920. Also, enrolments in State secondary schools rose because they charged no fees.

One social consequence of the depression was a fall in the birthrate. This reduced primary school enrolments after 1936 when this cohort passed through the age pyramid. A long term consequence of this was the shortage of pupils available to be trained as teachers to cope with the 'baby-boom' of the 1950's. As the depression came to an end many people began to question the fundamental assumptions that underlay the conservative parties' demands for more vocational education and a return to the 'basics' of education. This was so because it became clear that neither vocational training nor more teaching devoted to literacy and numeracy skills provided work. Also, the reductions in public spending on schools caused buildings to deteriorate and class sizes to rise. Therefore, both teachers, their unions and parents demanded higher governmental expenditure on education. Finally, it must be noted that the vocational skills per se had value but not as income producers. Some of these skills might have been better taught as leisure activities, thus helping to prepare pupils for long periods of unemployment.

The depression caused the Queensland Teachers' Union to become more radical and more vocal in its support of the Australian Labour Party. It did this not only because as a trade union it had a natural affiliation with that party, but also because the Moore Government's salary reductions caused teachers to believed that they were being unduly penalised and began to support an opposition party. The formation by private school teachers of their own association demonstrated this concern at another level as they, too, tried to regain lost real income. Perhaps another consequence of the depression was the realisation by teachers' groups that they held a powerful social weapon through their control of the classrooms.

However, after 1934 teachers turned their attention to the modern technologies that had advanced since 1929. The growing use of aircraft after 1934, especially by QANTAS, reduced their novelty in northern Queensland and the developments in radio allowed adults to bring the wider world into their homes. McKenna's personal use of the radio as a teaching device and Edwards's close co-operation with the Australian Broadcasting Commission encouraged teachers to use the medium more often in their teaching. Even small communities such as Balfe's Creek, Woodstock or Pentland raised money through Parents and Citizens' Associations to provide schools with speakers and receivers. The well presented lessons produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation led in the search for high quality radio teaching and Queensland's Education Department adopted many of these programs. Also, local skill and initiative helped to produce plays and scientific programs suitable for the Queensland context.

Unfortunately, the Queensland branch of the Australian Labour Party did not discover the benefits of secondary education for children. The Party pursued policies that had not fundamentally changed since 1915. They were out of date and became less appropriate as an increase in the mechanisation of daily life progressed. Both McKenna and Edwards visited countries overseas in 1936 and each reported their different perceptions of events there. Neither saw anything essentially wrong with the Queensland system but each emphasised different parts as being good. McKenna supported the vocational and practical work whereas Edwards stressed the more liberal approach to teaching and learning. It was symbolic of the future that the retiring Director-General, McKenna, visited Europe and the old world while the incoming one, Edwards, visited North America, as part of the new world.

The drought of 1936 unsettled the economic recovery that was in progress but it hardly affected the re-growth of enrolments in north Queensland's private schools. By 1937 their figures had passed those of the mid-1920's. But, many teachers and headmasters saw this as a return to the halcyon days of the 1920's rather than an advantage towards a new society that the post world war two events would produce. Nevertheless, it was during the late 1930's that the methods used for providing education to children in isolated places in the 1950's began. Aeroplanes, bitumen roads, motor vehicles and radio each played their part in bringing the Australians in north Queensland closer to their southern counterparts. However, it was the outbreak of another world war that stimulated these developments.

The headmasters' speeches of the non-Catholic private schools in the north recognised the direction from which danger would come when they warned of a war with Germany, where Germans had already begun to put the Jewish population into concentration camps. Rearmament commenced in a small way with the reintroduction of Officers' Training Corps in the schools and this gave boys their first experiences of the military life that their fathers suffered in the first world war. The Roman Catholic schools' speeches remained silent on this issue and that reflected their Church's ambiguity on the subject of fascism. However, nobody recognised the similar threat emanating from Japan. North Queenslanders went to war again in 1939 and the trauma of that event served to produce technological advances that genuinely overcame many of the handicaps caused by isolation after 1946.

In conclusion, this paper has tried to show that the provision of education to children in isolated places in north Queensland cannot be separated from the social, political, economic and technological trends in the world at large. The consequences of this realisation for those who wish to study rural education are that it temporal context of each place and then trying to identify and account for the themes and processes that pervaded the life of the children's communities. It is only by taking these factors into account that educators can provide a more sensitive system of education to such children.

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